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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 0047

RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH IMMEDIATE 6611

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 JEDDAH 000450

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARPI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/03/2016

TAGS: PGOV PINR PREL PTER SA

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR KHALILZAD MEETS WITH SAUDI CROWN PRINCE
AND KING

Classified By: Ambassador James C. Oberwetter for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) PARTICIPANTS: Meeting with King Abdullah

U.S.

Ambassador Khalilzad
Ambassador Oberwetter
Consul General Gfoeller
Special Assistant Hutchings
PolOff Dale (notetaker)

Saudi Arabia

King Abdullah
Prince Saud Al Faisal, Foreign Minister
Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Secretary General, NSC
Prince Muqrin, Chief, General Intelligence residency
Adel Jubeir, Interpreter

¶2. (U) PARTICIPANTS: Meeting with Crown Prince Sultan

U.S

Ambassador Khalilzad
Ambassador Oberwetter
Consul General Gfoeller
Special Assistant Hutchings
PolOff Dale (notetaker)

Saudi Arabia

Crown Prince Sultan

¶3. (S) Summary: In separate meetings with Saudi Crown Prince Sultan and King Abdullah on June 27, Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad discussed the new Iraqi government, the recently announced Iraqi national reconciliation plan, Saudi detainees, and the continuing destabilizing influence of Iran in Iraq. Ambassador Khalilzad reiterated earlier requests for the Kingdom's political and economic assistance to help reconstruct and stabilize Iraq, and contain Iran's influence in Iraq. End Summary.

Ambassador Khalilzad Meets with Crown Prince and King

¶4. (S) Reiterating much of the same message delivered to

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal (septel), Ambassador Khalilzad met individually with King Abdullah and Crown Prince Sultan on June 27 in Jeddah. Attending the meeting with the King were Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal; Prince Muqrin, President of the General Intelligence Presidency; and Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Secretary General of the National Security Council.

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¶ 15. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad reported that he believed Iraq is heading in the right direction, and that new Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki is a strong leader and is surrounded by a number of good ministers representing all Iraqi communities. Both King Abdullah and Crown Prince Sultan said that they looked forward to PM Maliki's visit July 1 to the Kingdom, and expressed their belief that things were looking better in Iraq. The King added that he agreed with Ambassador Khalilzad's assessment that PM Maliki was a stronger leader than his predecessor Ambassador Khalilzad said he hoped that the SAG would play a positive role in Iraq's reconstruction and support PM Maliki's recently announced national reconciliation plan. Both the King and Crown Prince thanked Ambassador Khalilzad for his update, and expressed hope for reconciliation and stability in Iraq because of the pain and suffering experienced by the Iraqi people.

¶ 16. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad outlined three issues that he believed were directly responsible for instability in Iraq; 1) there are people in Iraq who are against change, some of whom are associated with the former regime; 2) there are foreign terrorists in Iraq who often cooperate with each other; and 3) there are militias in Iraq. Ambassador

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Khalilzad told both the King and Crown Prince that it is vital that the Iraqi government continues to strengthen its security forces, and that militias must be disbanded.

Iran Interference is Detrimental

¶ 17. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad conveyed a message from PM Maliki that Iran was attempting to convince Iraq that it needed Iran's assistance to ensure stability. Both the King and Crown Prince agreed that interference by Iraq's neighbors would only serve to weaken and destabilize Iraq and stated that it was a mistake to allow the movement of people and weapons across Iraq's borders. The Crown Prince commented that the SAG hopes that recent changes in Iraq will improve the situation in that country. Ambassador Khalilzad also said that PM Maliki was eager to build a strong relationship with the Kingdom.

Role of New Cabinet Members

¶ 18. (S) The Crown Prince asked to which parties or factions the recently appointed Iraqi Ministers of Defense and Interior belonged. Ambassador Khalilzad assured both the King and Crown Prince that the Coalition had worked closely with the Iraqi government to ensure that candidates were chosen who would represent and work for all communities. He admitted that problems with the police force remained, mainly the result of past infiltrations by Shiite militias. The Crown Prince lamented the fact that the USG had not listened to the SAG's advice to not dismantle the security and military forces, arguing that they had been forced to work for Saddam's regime. He stated that once you deprive individuals of their salaries and food, they will turn against you. He advised that from now on, if there are no doubts about people, they should be accepted into the government.

¶9. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad assured both the King and Crown Prince that PM Maliki was committed to strengthening the military because PM Maliki believes that it is still a well respected institution. The King inquired how reconciled Ba'athist military officers would be received. Ambassador Khalilzad answered that due to the new Iraqi government's limited capacity, experienced military and government officials would be welcomed because of the expertise they bring with them. PM Maliki believes that 90-95 percent of Ba'athists could be reintegrated. Ambassador Khalilzad reiterated PM Maliki's belief that any role the KSA can play to help bring former military officers and other former government officials "back into the fold" is in the interest of the Kingdom and the region. Both the King and Crown Prince were in agreement with this assessment.

King and Crown Prince Stress Importance of Tribal Relations

¶10. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad said that PM Maliki understands that for a government of unity to succeed, all communities and tribes must be included. Ambassador Khalilzad noted that inside discussions revealed that Shiite tribes supported by Iran cannot govern by themselves, and that their "go it alone" mentality and inability to produce results led to considerable bloodshed. The Crown Prince stressed the importance of historical tribal relations, and that the new Iraqi government should pay attention to such relations, especially given the influence of the insurgent ideologies within certain tribes. The Crown Prince asked if the followers of Zarqawi still have a strong base in Iraq. Ambassador Khalilzad answered yes, but added that coalition and Iraqi security forces have also had much success against these groups.

Saudi Detainees in Iraq

¶11. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad informed the King and Crown JEDDAH 00000450 003 OF 004

Prince that the USG had decided to allow the return of 59 Saudis to the Kingdom. Both the King and the Crown Prince responded that it was in everyone's interest to return them to the Kingdom. The King said, "We can benefit from what we learn from them." He added that during the most recent terrorist raid in Riyadh, Saudi security forces detained an Iraqi citizen, and learned of plans for future terror attacks in Iraq. He said that this individual might be associated with terror groups based in or around Basra. The King asked if the USG had found additional information on these groups, and if the USG knew which Iraqis were working with Saudis in the Eastern Province. The King added that Iran's influence is facilitated by the presence of both the Iranians and their agents in Iraq. He wondered aloud how such influence might be countered and eliminated.

USG Should Avoid Hasty Withdrawal

¶12. (S) The King offered his own views on the current status of Iraq. He stated that the situation in Iraq needed more time, and that a hasty withdrawal of US military forces from Iraq would have negative consequences for both the US's standing and image and the stability of the region. The King said, "Iraq is a difficult place. Some people think that if Saddam were restored, there would be a return to civility. There is still no equity between various factions, and justice is missing." Comparing current conditions in Iraq to when Saddam was still in power, the King said, "Now it appears worse, there is no justice, and not much hope. I believe that if one studies a situation, and focuses on what

is best, one may be able to fix the situation. Iran covets Iraq, but you (USG) were not listening. Now the US wants to meet with Iran to discuss Iraq? Why would you want to involve Iran in Iraq? Why didn't you ask other countries who did not cause problems in Iraq about the situation?"

¶13. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad responded things are moving in the right direction, but admitted that many problems remain. He stated emphatically, "We will not withdraw despite public pressure without Iraqis being able to take care of themselves." He defended the US stance stating that it had reached out to others in the region to discuss Iraq. He told the King that at present the USG would only discuss with Iran nuclear proliferation issues, not Iraq. He agreed with the King that a premature withdrawal would have negative consequences for the US standing and regional stability. The king agreed, saying, "that is correct." Ambassador Khalilzad explained that it should be the USG's and SAG's mutual goal to work with Iraq and to reduce Iranian influence. He said that if Iraq became isolated, Iran would gain additional influence there.

¶14. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad noted that Iran felt threatened by the re-emergence of Iraq, especially if Iraq assumes its traditional role as "balancer" in the region. The King concurred strongly, saying that Iran wanted to force the USG to yield in Iraq. He emphatically stated, "This is impossible. We believe that the US, Iraq, and region's interests are in the SAG's interests. It is critically important that the US not be humiliated in Iraq, and the reality is that the US image and reputation are important to the SAG, and the interests of the region as a whole require this."

King Raises Issue of Militias

¶15. (S) The King asked how militias would be handled in Iraq. Ambassador Khalilzad responded that a key requirement is that militias be integrated, but not all into the Iraqi security forces. The King agreed, stating, "It would be a disastrous step to integrate militias into the military and security forces. Even thinking about integrating militias into the security forces is a mistake." The King asked if PM Maliki would raise the Ba'athist issue during his visit to the Kingdom. Ambassador Khalilzad answered yes, and encouraged the King to include Prince Muqrin in the discussions. The King agreed, and stated that conversations with Prince Muqrin, Prince Bandar, and the Foreign Minister

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Prince Saud would be useful.

Iranian Nuclear Proliferation

¶16. (S) The King expressed grave concern about Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. He said it would trigger a regional arms race, making the region even more unstable and dangerous. The King said that during his most recent contact with Iranian officials, he told them that it was in Iran's interest to look at the proposal on the table. The King said the Iranians answered that they would consider parts of the proposal. The King told Ambassador Khalilzad that "We (SAG) don't believe in triggering an arms race. We believe in peace and stability and constructive dialogue." The King expressed his concern about Israel's nuclear capability, and said, "Imagine how dangerous it would be to have nuclear weapons on either side. The Iranians must understand how dangerous this situation is."

Strategic Optimism

¶17. (S) The Crown Prince asked how Saddam's trial was proceeding. Ambassador Khalilzad responded that it was progressing, but that the recent killings of the lawyers were a setback.

Comment

¶17. (S) Although the King's reaction was mostly positive to Ambassador Khalilzad's message, it was apparent that PM Maliki had his work cut out for him when he visited the Kingdom July 1. The King is concerned and actively engaged on regional stability issues including the nuclear proliferation issue. He also appeared visibly worried that Iran is trying to assert itself more within the Arab and Islamic communities. The King commented that any call upon the Islamic world can only come from the Kingdom as the home of the two holy mosques. He also indicated that Iran does not adhere to moderation and the maintenance of balance, which is required as one of the main foundations of true Islam. He feels that many non-Muslims have fallen for Iran's propaganda, and he finds this very unfortunate. Although lower level Saudi officials have often used the term "arms race" during discussions with USG officials, to the best of Post's knowledge, this was the first time that the King had referred to an "arms race" in the Middle East. End Comment.
Gfoeller